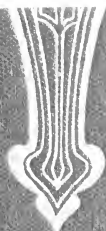


THE  
NIGHT COURT  
AND  
OTHER VERSE

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RUTH  
COMFORT  
MITCHELL











THE NIGHT COURT  
AND OTHER VERSE





# THE NIGHT COURT AND OTHER VERSE

BY  
RUTH COMFORT MITCHELL



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TO

FLORENCE STANDISH MOWATT MITCHELL

*Because you made the freedom where it grew  
My first small book goes, with my love, to you.*



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THE NIGHT COURT  
AND OTHER VERSE



## THE NIGHT COURT

“Call Rose Costara!”

Insolent she comes.

The watchers, practised, keen, turn down their thumbs.

The walk, the talk, the face — that seashell tint,—

It is old stuff; they read her like coarse print.

Here is no hapless innocence waylaid.

This is a stolid worker at her trade.

Listening, she yawns, half smiling, undismayed,

Shrugging a little at the law's delay,

Bored and impatient to be on her way.

It is her eighth conviction. Out beyond the rail

A lady novelist in search of types turns pale.

She meant to write of them just as she found them,

And with no tears or maudlin glamour round them,

In forceful, virile words, harsh, true words, without  
shame,

Calling an ugly thing, boldly, an ugly name;

Sympathy, velvet glove, on purpose, iron hand.

But *eighth conviction!* All the phrases she had planned

Fail; “sullen,” “vengeful,” no, she is n't that.

No, the pink face beneath the hectic hat

Gives back her own aghast and sickened stare

With a detached and rather cheerful air,

And then the little novelist sees red.

From her chaste heart all clemency is fled.

“Oh, loathsome! venomous! Off with her head!

Call Rose Costara!" But before you stop,  
And shelve your decent rage,

Let's call the cop.

Let's call the plain-clothes cop who brought her in.  
The weary-eyed night watchman of the law,  
A shuffling person with a hanging jaw,  
Loose-lipped and sallow, rather vague of chin,  
Comes rubber-heeling at His Honor's rap.  
He set and baited and then sprung the trap —  
The *trap* — by his unsavory report.  
Let's ask him why — but first

Let's call the court.

Not only the grim figure in the chair,  
Sphinx-like above the waste and wreckage there,  
Skeptical, tired of a retold tale,  
But the whole humming hive, the false, the frail,—  
An old young woman with a weasel face,  
A lying witness waiting in his place,  
Two ferret lawyers nosing out a case,  
Reporters questioning a Mexican,  
Sobbing her silly heart out for her man,  
Planning to feature her, "lone, desperate, pretty,"—  
Yes, call the court. But wait!

Let's call the city.

Call the community! Call up, call down!  
Call all the speeding, mad, unheeding town!  
Call rags and tags, and then call velvet gown!  
Go, summon them from tenements and clubs,  
On office floors and over steaming tubs!

Shout to the boxes and behind the scenes,  
Then to the push carts and the limousines!  
Arouse the lecture-room, the cabaret!  
Confound them with a trumpet blast and say,  
"Are you so dull, so deaf and blind indeed,  
That you mistake the harvest for the seed?"  
Condemn them for — but stay!

Let's call the code —

That facile thing they've fashioned to their mode:  
Smug sophistries that smother and befool,  
That numb and stupify; that clumsy thing  
That measures mountains with a three-foot rule,  
And plumbs the ocean with a pudding string —  
The little, brittle code. Here is the root,  
Far out of sight and buried safe and deep,  
And Rose Costara is the bitter fruit.  
On every limb and leaf, death, ruin, creep.

So, lady novelist, go home again.  
Rub biting acid on your little pen.  
Look back and out and up and in, and then  
Write that it is no job for pruning-shears.  
Tell them to dig for years and years and years  
The twined and twisted roots. Blot out the page;  
Invert the blundering order of the age;  
Reverse the scheme: the last shall be the first.  
Summon the system, starting with the worst —  
The lying, dying code! On, down the line,  
The city and the court, the cop. Assign  
The guilt, the blame, the shame! Sting, lash, and spur!  
Call each and all! Call us! And *then* call her!

## THE VINEGAR MAN

The crazy old Vinegar Man is dead! He never had missed a day before!

Somebody went to his tumbledown shed by the Haunted House and forced the door.

There, in the litter of his pungent pans, the murky mess of his mixing place —

Deep, sticky spiders and empty cans — with the same old frown on his sour old face.

“Vinegar-Vinegar-Vinegar Man!  
Face-us-and-chase-us-and-catch-if-you-can!  
Pepper for a tongue! Pickle for a nose!  
Stick a pin in him and vinegar flows!  
Glare-at-us-swear-at-us-catch-if-you-can!  
Ketchup-and-chow-chow-and-Vinegar-Man!”

Nothing but recipes and worthless junk; greasy old records of paid and due;

But down in the depths of a battered trunk, a queer, quaint valentine, torn in two —

Red hearts and arrows and silver lace, and a prim, dim ladylike script that said —

(Oh, Vinegar Man with the sour old face!) — “With dearest love, from Ellen to Ned!”

"Steel-us-and-peel-us-and-drown-us-in-brine!

He pickles his heart in"—*a valentine!*

"Vinegar for blood! Pepper for his tongue!

Stick a pin in him and—" *once he was young!*

"Glare-at-us-swear-at-us-catch-if-you-can!"—

"With dearest love"—*to the Vinegar Man!*

Dingy little books of profit and loss (died about Saturday,  
so they say),

And a queer, quaint valentine torn across . . . torn, but  
it never was thrown away!

"With dearest love from Ellen to Ned"— "Old Pepper  
Tongue! Pickles his heart in brine!"

The Vinegar Man is a long time dead: he died when he  
tore his valentine.

## DULZURA

Fading day, and the twilight falling  
Cool, with its quiet peace enthralling ;  
There are shrill coyotes calling  
In the beds of barren streams.  
Dusk, and an eagle sailing high ;  
Sun-baked earth and the placid sky,  
And a slim, gray lizard slipping by —  
And a brooding hush that seems  
To soothe and harbor and sanctify  
In a land of languid dreams.



## “THE ORIENT, HALF MOROCCO, 8 VO”

She bought a book, once, with the butter money —  
A wild, undreamed of, reckless thing to do!  
(So much to manage for the winter schooling;  
That split in Hannah Mary's Sunday shoe. . . .)

The cover bravely flaunted gold and scarlet,—  
Gave hint and promise of the hidden feast,  
Fine-grained and limber, sleek beneath the fingers,  
Frankly symbolic of the gorgeous east.

She wrapt it up and laid it in the bureau;  
She knew she would n't get to read it soon,—  
Not while she had the harvesters to cook for,  
Tho' maybe . . . of a Sunday afternoon. . . .

How often, then, her thoughts went winging to it,  
Thro' all the cumbered days she had to wait,  
Till, in a scanty hour of hard-won leisure,  
She entered shyly thro' the latticed gate:

Dim *harîms* . . . *sultans* . . . *yashmaks* . . . cloudy *nargil-*  
*lehs*,—

Strange sounding words from far-off story lands;  
The farm-house fades; the Wishing Carpet bears her  
To Kairowan, across the golden sands.

Since then, thro' all the somber woof of living,  
 For her the mystic Orient weaves its spells;  
 Faintly, at dawn, down thro' the dairy pasture,  
 She seems to hear the chime of temple bells.

Now she can see across the piles of mending —  
 (There is a window in her prison tower!)  
 Beyond the baking and the baby tending  
 The Mueddin calls across the sunset hour.

When the fierce August sun in grudging mercy,  
 Threatening worse torments for the morrow, sets,  
 The battered barns, the tanks, the gilded hay cocks,  
 Are distant domes and towers and minarets.

The sullen farmer, summoned in to supper,  
 Weary and silent as he slouches down,  
 To her fresh eyes becomes a mighty Caliph  
 Whose minions tremble at his slightest frown.

Subtlest of all — of course they do not mark it —  
 She in herself is gently touched with grace —  
 The swifter carriage of her toil-warped figure,  
 The ghost of girlhood in her furrowed face.

Sometimes they have to call her twice, and sharply;  
 (They see her, and they think that she is there!)  
 Thro' all the homely clamor, she is hearing  
 Oh, very near and clear, The Call to Prayer!

## ¿QUIÉN SABE?

In Córdoba within the drowsing Plaza,  
Beyond the sleepy, sun-drenched market-place,  
Vacant and bare, denuded of its statue,  
There stands a scarred and mournful marble base.  
The hours are tinkled from the old Cathedral,  
Gray-grim against the brilliance of the sky,  
And swooping downward in their clumsy circles  
The ugly, dun-winged buzzards slowly fly.

They light and struggle fiercely for a foothold;  
Their quarrels, shrill, discordant, pierce the air;  
The sluggish stream of life within the city  
Flows ever onward, calmly unaware.  
You ask in vain whose statue used to stand there,—  
A sun-drunk *peon*, dozing out his day,  
A grave eyed priest, a woman with *tortillas*,—  
The same regretful, velvet “*Yo no sé!*”

There was a scene here once to fit the setting,  
If we could pierce the shrouding of the years;  
There was a day for reverent unveiling . . .  
And swelling hearts, and brimming eyes, and cheers. . . .  
What patriot, red-blooded, gave it reason?  
What martyr marked it with his placid smile?  
Who set the pulses leaping for a season,  
And held the lime-light for a little while?

Who dares believe his laurel is immortal?  
Who thinks the marble proof against the years? —  
Or dreams the memory of his deed will linger  
When stilled the hearts, and dried away the tears?  
A fluttered flag, a sudden blare of trumpets,  
A path of flowers, a little burst of song. . . .  
Then withering and fading and the silence . . .  
Time dims all luster, and the years are long.

And now, within the hushed and drowsing Plaza,  
Beyond the sleepy, sun-drenched market-place,  
Stained with the years and weathered with the seasons,  
There stands a scarred and mournful marble base.  
Unheeding round its story flows forever  
The lazy current of the dozing town,  
And on it, hurtling in their clumsy circles,  
The ugly, dun-winged buzzards settle down.

## THE OLD MAID

She crossed over from the mainland on a wicked winter morning,—

I have never seen the mainland,— the sky was black with squall;

I mind well the sinful weather

And the ruin of her feather.

Eh, she was wet as water, but she never cared at all.

We took her for a missionary; she giggled when we told her so;

A funny, sudden laugh she had, that lifted like a tune.

She said she liked the look of us,

And thought she 'd make a book of us.

She took our little upstairs room and stayed until the June.

No man at all to fend for her! “Poor thing!” I would be calling her.

There was no fortune in her face and she was monstrous old.

When I was lacking years of that

I 'd 'Lizabeth and Lem and Nat;

But you 'd have thought her seventeen the way she up and told.

And always smiling to herself, the like of hearing happy news,

And kind of keeping marching step, as if she heard a band.

The gay and swinging stride of her!

Eh, grief and care walked wide of her!

I'd leave my work to look at her go speeding down the sand.

"Sea-going men, home-keeping maids," that's what the parson always says,

But just the same he liked her fine, and Doc and Teacher, too,

And rare and pleased to walk with her,

To lug her books and talk with her.

I wonder is her way the way all mainland women do?

And how the children tagged her round, and what she could n't do with them!

It was n't hardly fair to us, somehow, it seemed to me,

The way she could be sharing them

Without the pang of bearing them.

I'd sit and think and think of it when Lem was on the sea.

She used to tell me stories, too. Some of them I remember still.

I went far up the Cove and cried the day the book was through.

Afternoons we sewed together

And she *gave* me that grand feather.

I curled it in the oven and it came as good as new.

The while she stayed it did n't seem the island was a lonesome place.

The town went swarming to the boat and waving her  
Good-by.

I reddeed up the room again,

Eh, back to mop and broom again!

But I 'm going to see the mainland some day before I die.

## ST. JOHN OF NEPOMUC

One summer I Columbused John, in Prague, that deadly,  
Bush League town.  
I'd quit 'em cold on pictures and cathedrals for a while.  
I hung around for Ma and Sis (Good Lord, there was n't  
one they'd miss —  
Pale martyrs till you could n't sleep,— Madonnas by the  
mile!).

I read some dope in Baedeker about a tablet on the bridge,  
And how they slipped this poor old scout the double cross  
for fair.  
I'm off High Brow historic truck, but this old boy of  
Nepomuc,  
You must admit he was the goods. Believe me, he was  
*there!*

The King was Wenzel Number Four. John was Sky  
Pilot for the Court.  
King gets a hunch that Mrs. King has something on her  
mind.  
He goes to sleuthing more and more. He says—"Gad-  
zooks, I'll have their gore!"  
(Don't ever let 'em string you on that bunk that love is  
blind!)



The Queen (I'll bet she was some queen) she tangoes  
blithely on her way,  
And fails to see the storm clouds on the regal husband's  
dome.  
I got him guessed, that Wenzel guy, harpoons a girl that's  
young and spry,  
And tries to seal her up for life in the Old People's  
Home!

The way I had it figured out she married him to please  
her folks:  
"Our son-in-law, the King, you know!" (Some speed!  
I guess that's poor?)  
So, when she sights a Maiden's Dream, some real live  
wire that's made the team  
Well, she sits up and notices, like any girl. Why, sure!

Old Wenzel can't quite cinch the case, but what he  
does n't know, he thinks.  
The lump he calls a heart congeals beneath his fancy vest.  
He sends for poor old Father John and says as follows —  
"I am on!  
I merely lack a few details! What hath the Queen  
confessed?"  
He holds the Court upon the bridge. "Speak up," he  
says, "or otherwise  
These spears shall thrust you down to death! Come  
through! I am the King!  
Kick in! What did my spouse confess?" The Queen  
sends frantic S. O. S. . . .  
Maybe I sort of dozed, but well,— here's how I got this  
thing . . .

He saw the startled courtiers, straining their ears ;  
He saw the white Queen swaying, striving to stand ;  
He saw the soldiers tensely gripping their spears,  
Waiting the King's command.

He heard a small page drawing a sobbing breath ;  
He heard a bird's call, poignant and sweet and low ;  
He heard the rush of the river, spelling death,

Mocking him, down below,

But he only said, " My Liege,

To my honor you lay siege,

And that fortress you can never overthrow."

He thought of how he had led them, all the years ;

He thought of how he had served them, death and  
birth ;

He thought of healing their hates, stilling their  
fears. . .

Humbly, he weighed his worth.

He knew he was leaving them far from the goal ;

He knew with a deep joy it was safe and wise. . . .

He knew that now the pale Queen's pitiful soul

Would awake and arise,

And he only said, " My King,

Every argument you bring

Merely sets my duty forth in sterner guise."

He felt the spears' points, merciless, thrust him down ;

He felt the exquisite, fierce glory of pain ;

He felt the bright waves eager, reaching to drown,

Engulf him, body and brain :

He sensed cries, faint and clamorous, far behind ;

He sensed cool peace, and the buoyant arms of love ;

He sensed like a beacon, clear, beckoning kind,  
Five stars, floating above. . . .  
To the ones who watched, it seemed  
That he slept . . . and smiled . . . and dreamed . . .  
“And the waters were abated . . . and the dove” . . .

And there I was on that old bridge . . . boob Freshman  
me on that same bridge!  
The lazy river hummed and purred and sang a sleepy  
song . . .  
Of course, I know it listens queer, but gad, it was so real  
and near,  
I stood there basking in the sun for goodness knows how  
long.

Sometimes I see it even now : I see that little lean old saint  
Put up against the shining spears his simple nerve and  
pluck :  
And once, by Jove, you know, he came right down be-  
side me in the game. . . .  
We know who made the touchdown then, old John of  
Nepomuc!

## EL PONIENTE

Beneath the train the miles are folded by:  
High and still higher thro' the vibrant air  
We mount and climb. Silence and brazen glare;  
Desert and sage-brush; cactus; alkali;  
Tiny, low-growing flowers, brilliant, dry;  
A vanishing coyote, lean and spare,  
Lopes slowly homeward with a backward stare  
To jig-saw hills cut sharp against the sky.  
In the hard turquoise rides a copper sun:  
Old hopes come thronging with an urge, a zest:  
Beside the window gliding wires run,  
Binding two oceans. Argosy and quest!  
Old dreams remembered to be dreamed and *done!*  
It is young air we breathe. This is the west!

## HE WENT FOR A SOLDIER

He marched away with a blithe young score of him  
With the first volunteers,  
Clear-eyed and clean and sound to the core of him,  
Blushing under the cheers.  
They were fine, new flags that swung a-flying there,—  
Oh, the pretty girls he glimpsed a-crying there,  
Pelting him with pinks and with roses —  
Billy, the Soldier Boy!

Not very clear in the kind young heart of him  
What the fuss was about,  
But the flowers and the flags seemed part of him —  
The music drowned his doubt.  
It's fine, brave sight they were a-coming there,  
To the gay, bold tune they kept a-drumming there,  
While the boasting fifes shrilled jauntily —  
Billy, the Soldier Boy!

Soon he is one with the blinding smoke of it —  
Volley and curse and groan:  
Then he has done with the knightly joke of it —  
It's rending flesh and bone.  
There are pain-crazed animals a-shrieking there;  
And a warm blood stench that is a-reeking there;  
He fights like a rat in a corner —  
Billy, the Soldier Boy!

There he lies now, like a ghoulisn score of him,  
Left on the field for dead:  
The ground all round is smeared with the gore of him —  
Even the leaves are red.  
The thing that was Billy lies a-dying there,  
Writhing and a-twisting and a-crying there;  
A sickening sun grins down on him —  
Billy, the Soldier Boy!

Still not quite clear in the poor wrung heart of him  
What the fuss was about,  
See where he lies — or a ghastly part of him —  
While life is oozing out:  
There are loathsome things he sees a-crawling there;  
There are hoarse voiced crows he hears a-calling  
there,  
Eager for the foul feast spread for them —  
Billy, the Soldier Boy!

*How much longer, oh Lord, shall we bear it all?  
How many more red years?  
Story it and glory it and share it all,  
In seas of blood and tears?  
They are braggart attitudes we've worn so long;  
They are tinsel platitudes we've sworn so long —  
We who have turned the Devil's Grindstone,  
Borne with the hell called War!*

## PRAYER

(From the German)

Grant that deep in my heart, dear God,  
The spring of my youth shall stay,  
As sometimes gleams in an Autumn wood  
A bit of the green of May.

And when it comes to my life's last leaf,  
Vouchsafe that it may be one  
Withered and frail in the blast, but still  
Gay with the gold of the sun.

So be my passing, still, serene,  
In the wise Earth-Mother's way :  
Grant that deep in my heart, dear God,  
The spring of my youth shall stay !

## THE SIN EATER

### I

Hark ye! Hush ye! Margot's dead!  
Hush! Ha' done wi' your brawling tune!  
Danced, she did, till the stars grew pale;  
Mother o' God, an' she's gone at noon!  
Sh-h . . . d'ye *hear* me? — Margot's *dead!*  
Sickened an' drooped an' died in an hour.  
(Bring me th' milk an' th' meat an' bread!)  
Drooped, she did, like a wilted flower.  
Come an' look at her, how she lies,  
Little an' lone an' like she's scared. . . .  
(She lost her beads last Friday week,  
Tore her book, an' she never cared.)  
Eh, my lass, but it's winter, now —  
You that ever was meant for June,—  
Your laughing mouth and your dancing feet —  
An' now you're done, like an ended tune.  
Where's that woman? Ah, give it me quick;  
Food at her head and her poor, still feet. . . .  
There's plenty, fool! D'ye think th' wench  
Has *so* many sins for Himself to eat?  
Take up your cloak an' hand me mine.  
Are we fetching him? Eh, for sure,  
An' you'll come with me for all your quakes,  
Clear to his cave across th' moor!



— Margot, dearie, don't look so scared!  
It's no long while till your peace begins.  
What if you tore your book, poor lamb?  
I'm bringing you one will eat your sins!

## II

It's a blood red sun that's sinking . . .  
*Ohooo* . . . but th' marshland's drear!  
Woman, for why will you be shrinking?  
I'm telling you there's nought to fear.  
What if the twilight's gloomish  
An' th' shadows creep an' crawl? —  
Woman, woman, here 'll be th' cave —  
Stand by me close till I call!  
    “ Sin Eater! Devil Cheater!”  
    (Eh, it echoes hollowly!)  
    “ Margot's dead at Willow Farm!  
    Shroud your face and follow me!”

## III

One o' th' clock . . . two o' th' clock . . .  
This night's a week in span.  
Still he crouches by her side,  
Devil . . . ghost . . . or man?

## IV

Woman, never cock's crow sounded sweet before!  
Set th' casement wide ajar, fasten back th' door!  
(Eh, but I be cold an' stiff, waiting for th' dawn!)  
Fetch me flowers — jessamine — *See, th' food is gone!*  
Light enough to see her now . . . *Mary!* How her face  
Shines on us like altar fires, now she's sure o' grace!  
Never mind your book, my lamb, never heed your beads!  
There's th' Glean before you now,— follow where it  
leads!

## V

Tearful peace and gentle grief  
Brood on Willow Farm:  
Margot, sleeping in her flowers,  
Smiles, secure from harm:  
In a cave across the moor,  
Dank and dark within,  
Moans the trafficker in souls,  
Freshly bowed with sin.

## CASA VERDUGO

In the distance, growing nearer, there 's a jangling trolley  
car ;

There 's an irritating echo of a thousand things that jar ;

There 's a buzzing band of tourists and a dozen bores to  
shun —

But there comes a subtle silence with the sinking of the  
sun.

When the dusk is creeping, gray,

Comes a breath of yesterday.

Girded by the quiet hills

There 's a mystery that stills.

With the mantle of the twilight comes the light of other  
days,

When the garish lanterns glimmer through the peppers'  
misty maze,

And in the fields beyond us where the grasses bend and  
blow,

The crickets chant their service and the scarlet poppies  
glow :

Breath of orange and of lime,

Down the lazy slopes of time ;

Olden days, golden days,

Trooping down the dusky ways.

Can you conjure up a picture of a hundred years ago  
When the window framed a portrait for the cavalier  
below?

Can you let your fancy ramble while the gentle music  
purrs,

Back through all the hazy vistas to the days of silver  
spurs? —

Lace *mantillas* — flashing blades —

*Cabelleros* — serenades —

Mandolin and soft guitar,

Casements slyly set jar. . . .

Against the velvet darkness where the golden stars are set  
The hills are closing nearer in a somber silhouette,  
And the spirit of the evening seems to silently enfold  
And surround us with the fragrance of the gracious days  
of old —

Hey-days — gay days —

Trooping down the dusky ways,

Castanets — one forgets —

Far away the city frets.

## THE WISHING BRIDGE

'T is years ago I saw Herself ; a warm and wishful day  
in June,—

A Tourist Lady, silken fine, and me, the ragged wild  
gossoon!

I ran beside her stumbling nag (a hard mouthed creature  
old and slow)

The seven murdering Irish miles up thro' the Gap of old  
Dunloe.

And him that rode forninst Herself, and edging nearer  
all the while! —

The fat-jowled ugly old mudhoon, may devil take his oily  
smile!

I saw her turn her head aside, the whiles he 'd whisper  
in her ear ;

I saw the stricken eyes of her, so lost and lone and filled  
with fear.

But her old mother rode behind! She watched her like  
a pouncing hawk,

And purred like any pussy cat, and strained her ear to  
catch their talk.

His words were fair, bad scram to him, but oh, her mouth  
that drooped forlorn! —

Alone, for all the Tourist Folk, and lonesome as the moon  
of dawn.

“Now sorrow take your gold,” thinks I. “What’s jewels, lands, and satin clothes?”

If you’d be King of France itself, ’t is like a pig would eat a rose!”

The furze was gleaming in the sun, and when we climbed the topmost ridge,

“Miss, dear,” I points, “St. Patrick’s Lake! ’T is there we cross the Wishing Bridge!”

“The Wishing Bridge!” she says and smiles, and oh, her smile was worse nor tears.

“Give him the ‘no,’ Miss, dear,” I says, too low for any other ears,

And then rose red she went, the lamb, from her white neck until her hair,

And—“Funny Irish boy,” she says, “how did you guess— How do you *dare*—”

“Allannah, is it blind I am? Sure, he’s an owl if you’re a lass!

Lay your left hand upon your heart, and all you wish will come to pass!

Not while the furze is gold,” I says, “should young hearts ever mate with old,

Or love be sold for pounds or pence,—and faith, the furze is always gold!”

She stayed her nag upon the bridge; I saw her half scared glances dart:

She fetched a long and quivery breath; she laid her left hand on her heart.

I saw her eyes, the like of stars,—“Ochone,” thinks I,  
“sweet saints above!”

Who would n't sell his soul itself to be the man you're  
thinking of?”

Then he caught up and whispered low, but “No,” she  
gave him loud and clear,

Her head held up like any queen, and bold enough for  
all to hear,

And she rode on and paid no heed to the black rage be-  
hind her there —

The purple, poisonous look he had, the mother fit to tear  
her hair!

And then that furze was twice as gold, and like an angel's  
cloak the skies!

For whiles she hummed deluding tunes, and whiles she  
dreamed with misty eyes.

Too soon we reached Killarney's Lake: she paid me well  
and went her ways,

And oh, the Light was on her face! God save her kindly  
all her days!

Traveling folk come year by year. I guide and serve  
them as before.

I tell them tales: I earn my hire: I see the likes of her  
no more.

It warms me now, on winter nights, to mind her look,  
that day in June. . . .

A Tourist Lady, silken fine, and me, the ragged wild  
gossoon!

## FRENZY

When November seasons the air with wine,  
Gray day or golden, rain or shine,  
The touch that makes the whole world kin  
Is the alchemist in the football din.  
There 's magic first in the pushing crowd,—  
Jam in, cram in, you 're not proud!  
You hail your friends, you nod, you beam,  
Then up on your toes to greet the team!  
(What 's the use of buying a seat? —  
All you need is room for your feet!)  
Monday brings the same old grind —  
Lock the desk and never mind  
The loan you need and the mortgage due,  
The rent, the account you overdrew,  
The deal you made and the girl you kissed —  
To-day they simply don't exist!  
Down there on the field is the world for you,  
The Team, the Team, good men and true!  
You rise and fall with the battle's course;  
You shout till you 're breathless, red, and hoarse;  
In the mad, glad sight of the backs' advance  
You leap, you chortle, you gasp, you dance,  
You yell, for the football speech is blunt —  
"You there in the mackintosh! *Down in front!*"  
*Where* is that thing you hold most dear? —  
That mud-smeared, blood-stained leathern sphere?



A pounding heart and a prickling spine —  
Rah! Ray! Yip! Yi! It's over the line!  
Bedlam — Babel — chaos — then  
Your hair is turning white again.  
Sickening silence . . . you'd sell your soul  
To see that ball sail over the goal!  
Eternity — then the heavenly din!  
Your voice is gone, but you weep, you grin,  
Hug the stranger and love your foes,  
Forgive your debtors, forget your woes,  
Ask the girl for her answer then,  
Strike the boss for the raise again!  
The sun's come out and it's raining flowers,  
It's hailing nuggets — the world is ours!  
The earth's ablaze and the sky's aflame,—  
Life is good, for *we've won the game!*

## “EVER OF THEE”

### I

Crazy Daisy's singing to her fiddle in the rain,  
With the wet and swirling leaves, dancing down the lane.  
Maybe I can coax her in — see, she's coming by!  
(Land t' goodness, Fraidy Cat — would n't hurt a fly!)  
Hark? She's playing patch-work tunes. . . . It must  
    be twenty year. . . .  
Lazy, trifling artist scamp! . . . Listen! Can you hear?

*“Ever of thee I'm fondly dreaming. . . .  
My bonnie lies over the sea.  
When other lips and other hearts. . . .  
Oh, bring back my bonnie to me!”*

(I wonder if he thinks of her, back where he belongs,  
A-fiddling her days away, crazy-quilting songs?)

*“‘When will you be back, Lord Lovell?’ she  
    said. . . .  
Oh, Captain, Captain, tell me true,  
I saw three ships go sailing by —  
Does my True Lover sail with you?”*

II

Of a Monday she'll come by  
 When the clothes are drying,  
 Stand and wring her hands and cry —  
 Thinks it's sails a'flying —  
 “Little white wings, will you float me down  
 To my True Love's home in Boston town?  
 He told me he'd come back some day,  
 To the girl he left behind him,  
 But I'm afeard he's lost his way,  
 So I must go and find him!”

III

Sometimes by the graveyard wall  
 She will stamp her foot and call —  
 “Lazy Dead a'lying there,  
 Fie, for shame! It is n't fair!”  
 Then she'll sigh and shake her head —  
 “Who's alive and who is dead?  
 Wisht that I was buried deep;  
 Maybe I could get my sleep.  
 Why should you be resting here?  
 I been dead this twenty year:  
 Why must I be traipsing round  
 As dead as I can be?  
 Oh, Long Dead and Lucky Dead,  
 Get up and dance with me!”

## IV

By the little shiv'ry house where she lives alone  
She has scratched his name and hers on the stepping-  
stone.

All she has that speaks of him are the pictures, stained  
and dim —

Daisy in the fading dusk and Daisy in the dawn,  
Daisy in the candle light, with her figured lawn. . . .  
And there 's Crazy Daisy there, with her gray and tangled  
hair. . . .

Nights, if you go by that way, you can hear the fiddle  
say —

*"Lady Nancibel died of a broken heart. . . .  
I'll lay me doon an' dee. . . .  
The heart that has truly loved never forgets!  
Then you'll . . . remember . . . me . . ."*

## PAPYRUS

Fringing a silent stream in Sicily  
It stands remote, a link of living green,  
Exultant in its deathlessness between  
Present and past, eternal as the sea.  
Far from its ancient home, content to be  
The last of all its legion, like a queen  
In exile, dreaming ever of some scene  
Of former glory . . . prisoner, yet free.  
Dynasties perish ; palaces are dust ;  
The templed shrine of Zeus a ruin lies ;  
Yet here, immune from Time's death-dealing thrust  
It lives aloof, hoarding its precious prize,  
Secure, inviolate, a sacred trust,  
Until another Homer shall arise.

## LEAH

Out of Beersheba Jacob journeyed, thro' Padam-aram,  
valley and plain and stream,  
Best beloved of his mother, he of the stolen birthright,  
he of the Beth-el dream;  
*Israel*, when in later manhood "like a prince he pre-  
vailed" in that ghostly strife:  
Now, serene, confident, vision-driven, he was come to  
Haran, seeking a wife.

Calm and sure, he knew his own;  
Rachel waiting at the well;  
Saw her comely, luring, fair,  
Straightway kissed and claimed her there —  
As the promise, it befell.

Of Laban's daughters Moses tells us, finishing with a  
curious, quaint aside,  
"Rachel, the younger, was beautiful and well favored,  
but Leah was tender eyed."  
Jacob, secure of his ultimate triumph, of the safe elect  
that know no fears,  
Made his blithe bargain for her with Laban, lightly as-  
suming service, seven years:

Time was hung with rosy wreaths:  
What if joy and hope defer?

Walking his enchanted ways  
Seven years were seven days —  
“For the love he had to her.”

Laban, when the time was ended, summoned all his kinsmen, made a marvelous feast,—  
White wheaten cakes, and the tender flesh of the yearling,  
and wine of the mystic east:  
And so it came to pass in the evening that Leah, the elder,  
ashen pale,  
Cold to the bone and sick to the heart of her, under the  
film of the shrouding veil,  
Thro' the glimmering twilight, clad in the mocking bridal  
garments, hidden of face,  
Laban led to the waiting bridegroom, crowning his service,  
into her sister's place.

“And behold . . . it was Leah!”  
(Grim historian, Moses!)  
Shattered dream and jangled tune,  
Wormwood in the honeymoon,  
Dry crust, and rue for roses!

“Wherefore, then, hast thou beguiled me?”—“It is thus  
in the land of Haran,” Laban said.  
“It is the custom of our country; before the first-born,  
the younger may not wed.  
This my elder daughter, Leah, now look you, would she  
not be comely, but for tears?  
Would you have Rachel? Gladly and welcome! Will  
you serve me yet again seven years?”

This the romance; beguiled and bitter bridegroom,  
Fair, cheated Rachel, prize and crown and spur;  
Thus we have wept them, softly, down the ages,  
True Love's uneven way,—but what of her?

There lies the drama, there the subtle story.  
Moses has limned the journey of a soul,  
Up, up, and onward, toilfully achieving,  
Climbing from chaos toward a shining goal,—

Not in the man, predestinate to prosper,  
Not in the maid, in conscious power and pride,  
Worked for and wanted, Rachel the well favored,  
But in the other, Leah the tender eyed.

No promise there! No vision for her guiding.  
Hers was the sackcloth, hers the sterner part:  
No angels' ladder lighting her to glory,  
No stolen blessing for her burdened heart!

Hers to endure the sullen toleration,  
Hers to fall back before the wall of hate,  
Adamant, unyielding; longing to unlove him;  
Poor pawn of havoc on the board of fate.

Then, out of darkness, star-gleam and the dawning,—  
“*Sing, my soul! My dolorous days are done!*  
*Lo, the Lord God hath heard that I was hated!*  
*Mercy is His! I bear my lord a son!*”

Mocking mirage, enhancing arid desert. . . .  
Untouched; unheeding; ardently he went  
—Scorning her still, the mother of his man-child—  
Over the gleaming sands to Rachel's tent. . . .



Three times again she fared into the shadow,  
Three times again she strove with death and won;  
Three times her hope went winging from the ashes —  
“*Shall he not love me for this latest son?*”

Three times her heart in radiant rejoicing  
Lilted, ecstatic, leaping like a flame —  
*Reuben, Simeon, Levi* — the world might listen,  
Learning her longing in each joyful name.

Faltering, uncertain, keeping step beside her,  
Hope, sick and sallow with relentless years,  
Ever attended, slumbering or waking,  
By her lean hand-maids, faint and pallid Fears. . . .

But when once more she entered that grim tourney,  
She took farewell of all the haggard horde:  
Terrible, cleansing, driving all before him,  
Came revelation, sudden as a sword.

Then, only then, the substance for the shadow!  
Then the sealed pages silently unfold:  
Love's little snarings, pitiful and futile:  
Husks, tasteless Dead Sea Fruit . . . to *have* and *hold*.

What if she serve him still to outward seeming  
When faring far in rapturous release?  
Haran's torrid plain . . . but her feet were mounting  
High, ever higher on the hills of peace.

Day, warm and golden, and the false dawn faded:  
Let his name be *Judah*; a faith restored:  
Hope's feeble candle drenched in fullest sunshine —  
“Lo, it is finished! *I will praise the Lord!*”

## RONDEL

Amalfi

Dear, dim town in the dawn-light gleaming,  
Brooding over the still, blue bay,  
Dwells your heart in a long dead day?  
Your proud past are you always dreaming? —  
When Crusaders with banners streaming  
Gathered here for the Holy Fray?  
Dear, dim town in the dawn-light gleaming,  
Brooding over the still, blue bay,  
Then with life you were rich and teeming. . . .  
Idlers, now, on your winding way. . . .  
Do you live in your yesterday?  
Scorn to-day with its sordid scheming,  
Dear, dim town in the dawn-light gleaming?

## REVELATION

He had not made the team. The ultimate moment —  
Last practice for the big game, his senior year —  
Had come and gone again with dizzying swiftmess.  
It was all over now, and the sudden cheer  
That rose and swelled to greet the elect eleven  
Sounded his bitter failure on his ear.

He had not made the team. He was graduating:  
The last grim chance was gone and the last hope fled;  
The final printed list tacked up in the quarters;  
A girl in the bleachers turned away her head.  
He knew that she was trying to keep from crying;  
Under his tan there burned a painful red.

He had not made the team. The family waiting  
His wire, up State; the little old loyal town  
That had looked to him year by year to make it famous,  
And laureled him each time home with fresh renown;  
The men from the house there, tense, breathlessly watch-  
ing,  
And, after all, once more, he 'd thrown them down.

He had not made the team, after years of striving;  
After all he had paid to try, and held it cheap,—  
The sweat and blood and strain and iron endurance,—  
And the harassed nights, too aching-tired to sleep;

The limp that perhaps he might be cured of some day;  
The ugly scar that he would always keep.

He had not made the team. He watched from the side-lines,

Two days later, a part of a sad patrol,  
Battered and bruised in his crouched blanketed body,  
Sick and sore to his depths and aloof in dole,  
Until he saw the enemy's swift advancing  
Sweeping his team-mates backward. Then from his soul  
Was cleansed the sense of self and the sting of failure,  
And he was one of a pulsing, straining whole,  
Bracing to stem the tide of the on-flung bodies,  
Helping to halt that steady, relentless roll;  
Then he was part of a fighting, frenzied unit  
Forcing them back and back and back from the goal.  
There on the side-lines came the thought like a whip-crack

As his team rallied and rose and took control:

*He had not made the team, but for four long seasons,  
Each of ten grinding weeks, he had given the flower,  
The essence, and strength of body, brain, and spirit,  
He and his kind — the second team — till the power  
To cope with opposition and to surmount it  
Into the team was driven against this hour!*

What did it matter who held onto the leather,  
He or another? What was a four-years' dream?  
Out of his heart the shame and rancor lifted;  
There burst from his throat a hoarse, exultant scream.  
Not in the fight, but part of it, he was winning!  
This was his victory: he had *made* the team!

## IN THE COURT OF ABUNDANCE

Slipping behind a pillar, he eluded them,—  
His keen-eyed sister of the strident tone,  
Heading her straggling charges for the Zone.  
(How like an anxious hen she led and brooded them,  
Her flock, her own!  
Fiercely maternal, she could fight and feel for them,  
Now scolding shrilly, jerking on their coats,  
Now tucking mufflers round their meager throats,  
Unloved, unlovely, in her loving zeal for them!)  
He was alone!

Since first the gates were opened, she had harried him,  
Pushing and planning in her forceful way.  
(They were to make the most of this first day!)  
Past miles of sights and sounds her vim had carried him,  
Amazed, confused.  
Past friezes quivering in the burnished weather,  
Small, squealing engines, pea-nuts, huge machines,  
Peaches in jars, and grain done into scenes:  
His feet shrieked dumbly in their patent leather:  
He felt misused.

It was so different from his ardent hope of it  
All thro' the months that he had skimped and saved,  
Thro' all the melting journey he had braved.

To sign and symbol, to the breadth and scope of it  
He had no key.

It dwarfed and scared him. Toil and care were part of  
him

At the dull counter where he spent his days.

This beauty swam before him in a maze.

He limped away. He turned . . . joy filled the heart of  
him,

And jubilee.

Grace of a heedless turning,  
Here he has found his hour:  
Mystical incense burning . . .  
Rise of the rhythmic tower. . . .  
The sight of it fires and thrills him;  
The hush of it soothes and stills him;  
The Court of Abundance fills him . . .  
Plenty and peace and power.

Grace of heedless turning,  
Here he has reached his goal.  
This was his poignant yearning  
Where he may loose his soul,  
And whether for truth or seeming,  
For waking or kindly dreaming,  
Beguiling or full redeeming,  
Here he is healed and whole.

This is his perfect hour. It can not stay;  
Yet shall he bear the balm of it away.  
Relentless ticket! He must go once more  
Back to Gents' Furnishings in Arnold's Store!

Even to-morrow he must go again  
Back with his sister to the haunts of men  
To push and crowd and sight-see all the time,—  
To strain the last mean penny from a dime;  
Small, sticky fingers and shrill, petty strife . . .  
Back to that little snarled and tangled life. . . .

But here in a strange, stern summer,  
Silent, aloof, alone,  
Safe in the Court of Abundance  
He has embraced his own.  
Life in a rosy fountain,  
Eerie and wraith-like, frail,  
Glowing like a phantom opal  
Under the fog's faint veil,  
Dowering him with dominion,  
Beauty and power and might,  
For he is now *The Caliph*,  
*Sallying forth in the night.*

## WHILE THE TRAIN WAITS

*(The Blind Minstrel Sings:)*

Long ago, in old Morelos, dwelt a maid of far renown;  
Eyes like stars in cloudy heavens; like the raven's wing,  
her crown.

Every night beneath her window many a gallant song was  
sung,

Lords and nobles, mighty warriors, grave and gay, and  
old and young.

“Oh, my Lady, oh, my Lady, humbly do we sue for  
grace!

For the sound of your sweet speaking, for the vision of  
your face!”

*(He Speaks to his Grandchild:)*

*“Little frog, thou art my eye-sight,—*

*There are many Gringos, yes?*

*Have no fear! They will not harm thee!*

*Let them see thy ragged dress!”*

*(He Sings:)*

Knightly suitor, sage and soldier, steadily she said them  
nay.

Vast the patience of their pleading; still she turned her  
head away;



But when all the prayers were uttered and the long fare-  
wells were done,  
Came another to her window then — the gardener's hand-  
some son.

“ Oh, my Lady, oh, my Lady, blest beyond belief is  
this,

That I have your face to gaze on and your finger tips  
to kiss ! ”

*(He Speaks)*

*“ Nay, do not heed the lady's smile!  
Men have shame to say thee nay.  
The women call thee pretty names,—  
Men say little, but they pay! ”*

*(He Sings:)*

Vain their ardent supplications to the snow-cold maid  
above.

What are name and fame and fortune to the leveler of  
love?

Once, upon a silver midnight, crept the lady down the  
stair,

Softly through the sleeping Palace to her lover waiting —

*(He Speaks:)*

*“ Ah, the train goes on, Josita!  
See, I spit upon the rail!  
Count their evil-smelling money —  
Pigs of Gringoes, fat and pale! ”*

*Holy Mother, what a harvest!*  
*What a feast day this shall be!*  
*— There 's the rent . . . and my tobacco . . .*  
*And a sugar-plum for thee!"*

## SYMPHONY PATHETIQUE

That woman with the somber eyes  
Had come to write and criticize,  
But see her now with ardent face  
Transfigured for a little space,  
Leaning far forward in her seat,  
Wrapt in the rhythm and the beat —

The volume and the surge of it,  
The lovely lilt and swell of it;  
The vigor and the urge of it;  
The rapture . . . and the knell of it;  
The rose and gold, the warmth and glow,  
The mauve and gray, the ice and snow.

Trembling, swaying,  
Pleading, praying,  
Spurning, lashing,  
Climbing, crashing —

Titanic rage . . . and tenderness. . . .

To hurt, to heal; to curse, to bless. . . .

And now the year's at June again,

And now the day's at noon again!

She settles back, and with a sigh  
She puts her stubby pencil by.  
She will not try to shape and frame,  
To pack sensations in a name,—  
To harness up the cyclone's march;  
To reinforce the rainbow's arch;

Stab Pegasus with iron spur :  
Use symbols for a tool  
To chisel to a granite word  
The subtleties she felt and heard,  
Nor wind a web of gossamer  
Upon a wooden spool.

## THE SUBWAY

### I

Crowds pour down from the street and out of the locals,  
A turbulent, tossing, rushing, surging stream,  
Choked and dammed on the narrow, congested platform  
Into a seething, eddying, heaving pool;

Crowds pour down from the street and out of the locals,  
And up the stairs and down and from the express,  
Wriggling, squeezing, squirming, panting and breathless,  
They push and pull and jostle and jam and swarm:

The scuffle of feet, the solid impact of bodies,  
The sharp staccato of swiftly slamming doors:

Over and over again the raucous order

Harsh from the throat of the melting, grimy guard —

“Watch-step — watch-step — watch-step — watch-step-  
step-lively!”—

Like a neighbor’s cracked, unceasing gramophone.

He wedges and fits and packs with swift precision,

Shoves and shoulders and crams and crushes them in,

And slides the door on the heaving, struggling bodies,

Cutting away the hapless, overflowing,

As a pastry cook trims off the edge of a pie.

Crowds pour down from the street and out of the locals,

They push and pull and jostle and jam and swarm,

Tired people with fretful pallid faces,

Fighting their way in silence, tense and grim,

Obsessed, intent, unheeding, dogged and joyless,—  
 A fierce and virulent form of the verb To Go! —  
 Pushing, fighting, jamming —

*On the coast of Maine  
 Little hollow houses  
 Are graying in the rain  
 Ghostly in the moonlight,  
 Bleaching in the sun;  
 Pitiful with emptiness,  
 For their day is done.*

## II

The platform, now remembered, seems a haven,—  
 Compared with the coach, a cool, and spacious place.  
 The breathless, throbbing heat is horrifying;  
 The heat . . . the heat . . . the wilting, relentless heat.  
 They sit or stand, relaxed and limp, enduring  
 The torrid hyphen that bridges work and home:  
 Some irate and some in a pallid patience,  
 Pale people and people shining and red.  
 There is a small dark girl in a mussy middy,—  
 A middy blouse that makes you think of the sea —  
 The tumbling sea with crisping crests of foam —  
 Salt, stinging spray and bravely shining brass  
 And gay, striped awnings — suppers on the deck —  
 But she had worn it to work for many days,  
 And she looks as if she never had seen the sea.  
 There are dull-eyed girls whose gallant rouge and powder  
 Are cut by crooked water-ways of sweat.

The stifling, choking heat is horrifying;  
The heat . . . the heat . . . the merciless, melting heat.  
A standing woman is gasping and going to faint;  
She lets the handle go and sags inertly,  
But she is n't going to fall; there is n't room,  
For she is glued between a tipsy sailor  
And a sallow, shaking wraith with a bandaged head.  
The air is stale and dead and hotter . . . hotter. . . .  
Breathing is baffled by fluffy puffs of heat  
From the crushed and steaming mass of human cattle,  
Wedged in, body to body and breath to breath.  
Stifling, gasping, reeking —

*Westward, cool and dry,  
Miles and miles of prairie  
Roll up against the sky;  
Sun-cured and radiant,  
Redolent and keen,  
Wide and free beyond the gaze,  
Wind-swept and clean.*

## III

Rattle and crash and roar of the rapid transit,  
Mad modern music, built on the theme of speed;  
Single noises and noises welded together,  
With one out-standing in discord, over all,  
Until in the jaded brains it hums and pierces  
Like the sly, burrowing buzz of the dentist's drill.  
There are glaring lights which make the noise seem  
louder,—  
The lurid glow of a fierce electric noon:

There are signs which draw the tired eyes up like magnets,

Strident signs which are noises visualized ;

You cannot evade or dodge them,— loud, insistent,  
Insolent signs, determined to be read.

They scream of somebody's soup and soap and garters,

Somebody's pajamas and tea and cigarettes,

And somebody's gloves and gum and flour and tonic,

Somebody's whisky and collars and breakfast food.

The eyes that read must run from color to color,

Stabbed and prodded with yellow and rasping red

Until with the jolt and jar of the frantic going

Is mingled the crash of unrelated tones.

There are reds and blues and yellows that are noises

And noises that are yellow and blue and red ;

The senses of sight and sound are nagged and goaded,

Noise in the eyes as harsh as noise in the ears ;

The rushing roar of the crazy speed enhances

The garishness of the bright and glaring gloom.

Jolting, rasping, screeching —

*Over plain and hill*

*There is sanctuary,*

*Inviolable and still ;*

*There is hush and healing ;*

*Dimly green, afar,*

*Stand the forest places,*

*Silent as a star.*



## VENETIAN BOATS

On looking at Benjamin C. Brown's Aquatint.

" Venetian Boats —"

I had forgotten Venice!

I had stopped remembering it was there.

Blood and flame is what I have been thinking

Over there;

Flame and blood;

Famine, and the trenches, and the mud,

Soul-destroying mud;

(Always they are telling of the mud!)

Dreadful, mended faces I've been thinking;

Ghoulish cripples. . . .

Now I stare

At the placid pattern of the ripples.

It is *there!*

With a rush of memory returning

Now I can remember

And I know

What seems here a gentle, sallow silence

Is a quivering shimmer

And a glow,

Opalescent,

Silver,

Iridescent,

Colored like an abalone shell.

Veronese,  
Giorgione,  
Titian,

Tiepolo, this is where they dwell!  
I shall hold remembrance fast in future,  
Clinging to the comfort I have caught;  
It shall be a secret sanctuary  
For my thought.  
Sails of cream and crimson in the sunset,  
Crumbling palaces of pinky pearl;  
Lantern lights;  
Dawns of gauze and days of silk and amber;  
Velvet nights:  
Sleepy slipping . . . slapping . . . of the water,  
And my little cake-shop's silly show!  
Tintoretto's shy child-Virgin in the Temple,  
Step by step ascending the great stair,  
And a certain very grave young angel  
In a whispering corner that I know. . . .

“ Venetian Boats ”—

I had forgotten Venice!

I had stopped remembering it was there.

## BARBARA

Barbara, child, with luminous face,  
If you had lived in the daintier days  
With your fine, frank ladyhood look of race,  
In your decorous cap and sober grace,  
Delicate bards would have penned your praise,

Tenderly sung with a sheltering smile  
Of your "starry gaze" and your "brow of snow"  
And prayed there should never a breath defile  
From a world without that is sad and vile;  
"Pure" and "secure" would have rhymed, I know.

But, Barbara, this is a sterner age.  
We shall ask for your hands, to help and heal;  
We shall call you soon in the war we wage;  
We shall want your tears and your high white rage;  
Your slim, strong shoulder against the wheel.

They'd have set your beauty within a bower,  
But we cannot spare you. We need you so!  
You are vital force; you are not a flower!  
You are challenge and promise; peace and power —  
Your starry gaze and your brow of snow!

## CITY-BOUND

They are digging a ditch in the street.  
One of the laborers sings.  
It is a song in a southern tongue  
And it lifts and lilts and swings.  
The pavement stubbornly yields;  
The rhythm quickens and thrills;  
Suddenly I am away, away,  
In the high Sicilian hills,  
Afoot on a rising road  
That mounts like a spiral stair,  
Alone in a warm young world,  
Afloat in cerulean air.  
I am afoot and alone,  
Climbing higher and higher;  
The shade is a silver stream,  
The sun is a golden fire.  
The sky blue line of the sea  
And the sea blue sky line meet:  
I am afoot and alone; *alive!* —  
They are digging a ditch in the street.

## SARAH CLEGHORN

The minor music of the humdrum world :  
She sang the Maiden Ladyhood to fame  
In words as quaintly sturdy as her name ;  
Beneath her pen the Sliding River purled ;  
Thro' reel and rigadoon sprigged flounces whirled ;  
While the small patient played a gallant game  
" Saint R. L. S." fanned up the feeble flame ;  
A little lame step-daughter's hair was curled.

Yet she can rouse and rend us if she will,  
Reveal and scorn us in a scathing tone !  
" Poltroon " is bracing in its tonic gall.  
Greatly endowed for the great themes, and still  
Pledged to the plain, the meek, the near and known ;  
The faithful, tender minstrel of the small !

## A MOUNTAIN MUMMER

(Written for William Stanley Braithwaite's Shakespeare Page  
in the *Boston Transcript*.)

'Lijah was more than thirty when the road  
Linked his high mountain cabin with the school,  
A quaint child-giant, somber eyed and cool.  
Grave, wondering, but unashamed, he strode  
Across the threshold, and to word and rule  
Bent thirsting, desert traveler to pool,  
Drinking great dizzy draughts, swallowing hard  
Through alphabets, past primers, to the Bard;  
Lifting at last a happy head that whirled,  
Lifting a heart that *suffered a sea-change*,  
Lifting a kindled vision *rich and strange*,—  
“How beauteous mankind is! Oh, brave new world!  
How many goodly creatures are there here!”

Then with a gracious haste, not suddenly,  
But softly, like the process of the year,  
Came *glorious summer* through this wizardry  
On the bleak *winter of his discontent*.  
Feuds found him gentle; peace was permanent.  
Deftly he learned to dramatize his days  
In the enchanted country of his brain,  
To walk rechristened in familiar ways,—  
The Moor, Macbeth, the Melancholy Dane,  
Ill-used old Lear abroad in wind and rain;

To muse in warmth and melody until  
Drab and unlovely commonplaces wore  
The look of Arden or of Elsinore,  
And his harsh mountain top, forbidding, hoar,  
Was softened to a *heaven-kissing hill*.

A little sallow sister, wistful-eyed  
And wistful witted, when mischance befell,  
Found solace and asylum at his side  
And herb o' grace and balm instead of rue,  
For "*one who loved not wisely but too well.*"  
When his own hour had come, he went to woo  
The daughter of his family's ancient foe,  
Uplifted in his hopelessness, elate,  
Romeo, revelling in moonlit woe,—  
"*My only love sprung from my only hate!*"  
A gaunt, red-wristed creature, stooped and shy,  
Sullen, and difficult to glorify,  
Abashed before his eloquence, and yet  
Transmuted by the Avon alchemy  
Into the honey-hearted Juliet,  
And a black boulder was her balcony  
Where the white fervor of his rapture flamed.  
Then, as the seasons faded, she was named,  
As his mood called for misery or bliss,  
Katharine, Portia, Constance, Beatrice,  
Lioness, butterfly, or mourning dove;  
Full many ladies and of many minds,  
But though she shriveled with each added year,  
Sagged, and grew silenter and still more sere,  
She never changed for him. "*Love is not love  
Which alters when it alteration finds.*"

Always he planned, when the last curtain fell,  
That he would make his Exit handsomely  
And cheerily,—“*not so deep as a well!*”  
Swiftly and lustily he longed to go,  
A gallant humor in his tragedy,  
But it was something difficult and slow. . . .  
A long-drawn, unrelenting cruelty.  
Then was it given to his soul to know  
*Alarums and excursions*, lest he yield,—  
Play craven in his own brave theater.  
Day dragging day, he met it jauntily,  
With every darting pain a rapier,  
And every battled breath a Bosworth Field,  
Upstanding and unconquered, cap-a-pie,—  
“*A horse! A horse!*” Again? “*Lay on, Macduff,*  
*And damn'd be him that first cries ‘Hold, enough!’*”  
Retreating inch by inch, too staunch for flight,  
Proud to delay, since that meant mastery,  
Longing, forespent, to *bid the world Good-night*.  
He bade his spirit with a hard-wrung smile,  
“*Absent thee from felicity awhile!*”



## CHERRY WAY

Here, before the better streets begin,  
Grimy backs of buildings wall it in,  
Strident with the station's endless din,  
And a yoke  
Of dun smoke  
Makes its title a dull joke.

Time was, once, long fled, when this slim street  
Was all color-tremulous and sweet;  
When the Sygne-Poste had a right to say  
"Cherrie Waye,"  
But to-day  
It is palely bleak and gray.

Sometimes, when the moon is riding high,  
Whitely, in a cold and cobalt sky,  
From beneath their ancient graves close by,  
Shadowed deep,  
Ladies creep  
Here to wring their hands and weep;

Holding up the flounced and flowered skirt  
From the sordid ugliness and dirt,  
With faint sighs and gesturings of hurt,  
As to say —  
"Lack-a-day!  
Can thys be Oure Cherrie Waye?"

## BONDAGE

By river banks in Babylon we mourned, remembering;  
We hanged our harps on willow trees, but herein lay the  
sting —

We would have wept Jerusalem till all the heathen earth  
Grew green, but they that wasted us required of us mirth,  
And then indeed the nights were black, the leaden days  
were long,

For they that carried us captive required of us a song.

And those of us in bondage still, sigh that we may not  
know

The solace of our suffering, the luxury of woe;  
When we would water with our tears the garden of our  
grief

We hate the cheer they hold us to; rebel against relief.  
We fear, in fiercest loyalty, to do our sorrow wrong,  
*For they that carried us captive required of us a song.*

## DELIVERANCE

Set in September's oven the city bakes,  
Spilling its frowsy odors on the air.  
The child droops, wilting, and her brooding stare  
Goes further than the push-cart's speckled cakes.  
The little mat of shadow that she makes  
Sketches a pattern on the pavement there.  
“*To play,*” they said, “*in gardens green and fair. . .*”  
She visions with intensity that aches.

Yet they shall come for her! Down her dull street  
Awake, aware at last, they come, they speed,  
Eager, aroused, on beautiful swift feet,  
And in her day and season she shall see  
Through the vast lump of ignorance and greed  
A little leaven working mightily!

## POST-GRADUATE

If she had lived a little while ago  
She would be wearing tranquil caps of lace ;  
Withdrawing gently to her quiet place,  
Sighing, remotely, at the world's drab woe.  
To-day, she fronts it squarely as her foe,  
Not from the inglenook but face to face,  
Marching to meet it, stoutly keeping pace,  
Armored in wisdom, strong to overthrow.

This is the work she always understood :  
The world in terms of home. Set free to flower  
(Unhindered now, her own brood long a'wing)  
In broader, all-embracing motherhood :  
Calm with the years and ardent with the hour,—  
Indian Summer with the urge of Spring.

# THE SWEETMEAT GAME

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## CHARACTERS

YIONG-YUENG, "LIVE FOREVER," *a Merchant.*

SAN-CHI, "BEAUTIFUL BIRD," *his blind son.*

WOO-LIU-MAI, "SWEET SMELLING FLOWER," *his second wife.*

A WHITE DEVIL, *a New Year's reveler.*

SCENE — "*China Town,*" *San Francisco.*

TIME — *An Evening of the Chinese New Year.*

## THE SWEETMEAT GAME

SETTING: *Living-room in the dwelling of YIONG-YUENG, in Dupont Street, San Francisco's Chinese quarter.*

*It is dimly lighted, its bare ugliness veiled in soft shadow.*

*There is a little shrine at one side, a clear, pale light above it revealing a grotesque Joss, prayer sticks and prayer papers beneath it, and a dull blue pot of incense, smudging slowly, with a pungent and penetrating smell.*

*On the other side of the room is a small toilette stand with beauty box and mirror, a lantern above it.*

*Near the center is a black table on which are a curious pipe, a frame of embroidery, and the lilies of the Chinese New Year in a quaint dish. They stand oddly aloof and chaste in their cool, prim purity. A globe of gold-fish.*

*Dimly seen doors Left and Right,—Right leads to the hall, thence to the street, and Left to the cooking and sleeping rooms.*

*A single window, heavily barred, up stage center, gives on a narrow balcony with iron railing. Just outside the window hangs a huge lantern, strident with color, swaying gently in the wind.*

*[The stage is empty at the rise of the curtain: From the gambling-house next door comes the sound, from time*

*to time, all through the play, of the slamming of a heavy door, and the long, sing-song cry of the look-out. From the theater across the street there filters now and then a wailing Chinese melody. Sometimes the music is thin and plaintive on the strings, then crashing and discordant with brassy cymbals and flat-toned wooden drums.]*

*[The door at the Right is flung open.]*

WOO-LIU-MAI

*[Comes in swiftly, leading the blind boy. She wears the rough garb of a cooley serving woman, the hood pulled well over her face. She closes the door and stands with her hands clutched together on her breast, breathless and half crying.]*

San-Chi, I faint and perish of my fright!

SAN-CHI

*[Groping back toward the door.]*

Soul-of-a-toad, I will go down again!

WOO-LIU-MAI

*[Hastily slipping off the outer garment.]*

Beautiful Bird, the demons have your wits!  
Oh, I was mad to take you out to-night  
When New Year's revelers fill up the street  
And all the Quarter swarms with pushing crowds!  
Gaping White Devils jostled us! Your sire,  
My August Husband, might have seen us there!  
Then, all the gods defend me from his wrath!

*[She flings the coarse outer dress back into the deeper*



*shadows and is revealed in the exquisite costume of a high class Chinese woman.]*

SAN-CHI

*[Angrily, groping for her.]*

Soul-of-a-toad, I will go out, I say!

Quick! I will beat you! Take me down again!

WOO-LIU-MAI

*[Meekly, as she kneels before the dressing stand, putting carmine on her lips and cheeks and fingernails.]*

Sweet Step-son, you will beat me, either way!

Because I was born woman, and you blind,

I must endure the rigor of your rage,

But still I dare not yield to you in this.

SAN-CHI

*[Spoiled, sullen, helpless, richly clad in gay green and purple, suddenly sits down on the floor and begins to cry.]*

Soul-of-a-toad, I hate you! Take me out!

WOO-LIU-MAI

*[Kicking off the clumsy servant's shoes and putting on her own small and dainty slippers.]*

San-Chi, to-morrow, truly, you shall go!

SAN-CHI

*[Sullenly.]*

To-night!

WOO-LIU-MAI

Beautiful Bird, I do not dare!  
You know your August Father is abroad,—  
What if he saw us — if he knew my sin? —  
How, for a year, I've wantonly transgressed,  
Donned a rough servant garb and led you forth  
Into the brazen streets by night and day,  
Boldly, into the vulgar, public streets,  
Like Big Foot Women, to be eyes for you!

*[Overcome with the thought of her sin, she prostrates herself before the shrine, praying fervently.]*

Merciful Goddess with ears in your heart!  
Save and defend me! He never must know!  
With his own hands would he slay me!

*[Wailing.]*

Ai! Ai!

SAN-CHI

*[Delightedly.]*

Woo-Liu-Mai! I should like that! Tell him! Quick!  
Soul-of-a-toad, I say that he must know!  
Then I shall hear him slay you . . . hear you scream!

*[Interestedly.]*

How will he do it? Will he strangle you?  
Will he slit up your throat with his sharp knife?  
Or bring you poison from his chemist's shop. . . .  
Poison to make you writhe and jerk and moan?

*[Excitedly.]*

Step-mother, I will tell him, I, myself!  
Oh, when will he be home? I cannot wait!

WOO-LIU-MAI

*[Meekly.]*

San-Chi, your word is law! But — when I'm dead,  
Who, of the living, will be eyes for you?  
Mah Foy, our stupid servant, or your sire,—  
Your August Sire who rarely speaks to you?

SAN-CHI

*[His face falling.]*

Alas!

WOO-LIU-MAI

*[Craftily.]*

Listen? You hear? The look-out calls —

*[The long, sing-song call is heard.]*

To Toy Chung Lung, high in his gambling den. . . .  
The heavy doors are slamming, one by one,  
The men go creeping up the inky stairs. . . .

*[Music sounds from the theater.]*

Across the street in the gay theater  
Beautiful persons act a tragic play,—  
“The War that waged Between Five Provinces,  
Or How Kind-Hearted Ladies Came to Beg  
That they would moderate surrender's terms!”  
Listen . . . they sing of war, and love, and hate. . . .

SAN-CHI

*[Listens in fascination.]*

WOO-LIU-MAI

Down in the streets White Devils push and peer;  
Men clad in black like coolies, fat and dull;

Women like pea-cocks, brazen, bare of throat,—  
Great, shining carriages that glide along  
Without a horse, propelled by evil power. . . .

[*Whispering, eerily.*]

And in dark alleys where the hatchet men  
Slink in the shadow, shadow-like, and wait,  
Bright death is lurking with a shining face,  
Swift, silent death that crouches —

SAN-CHI

[*Eagerly.*]

Well! Go on!

WOO-LIU-MAI

[*Exultantly.*]

Amiable Step-son, see? You need me still!

SAN-CHI

[*Grudgingly.*]

Then, take me down, and I will let you live!  
If you will take me out, I will not tell!

WOO-LIU-MAI

[*Beguilingly.*]

San-Chi, we have a pleasure close at hand!  
How is it you forget our Sweetmeat Game?

SAN-CHI

[*Beginning to caper and smack his lips.*]

The Sweetmeat Game! I love the Sweetmeat Game!  
Soul-of-a-toad, make haste! I cannot wait!

WOO-LIU-MAI

*[Patters to her dressing-stand for a piece of pink sweetmeat.]*

Beautiful Bird, be patient while I think!  
You are so clever and you hunt so well!  
Where can I hide it from your speed and skill?

*[Smiling to herself, she places it near the edge of the table, seats herself and takes up her embroidery.]*

Ready, oh, Wise One?

SAN-CHI

*[Chuckling.]*

From my speed and skill!  
Soul-of-a-toad, I'll find it! You will see!  
But say the rhyme, Step-mother, say the rhyme!

WOO-LIU-MAI

*[In a chanting sing-song.]*

Haste, Mighty Mandarin,  
Speed thro' the Shadow Land!  
Perils attend your steps,  
Dangers on every hand!

*[As he nears the shrine.]*

Not where the temples stand!

*[As he nears the globe.]*

Not on the ocean's strand!

*[As he drops to hands and knees.]*

Not where the lands are low. . . .  
To the hill tops you must go!

There is a mountain high,  
Piercing the purple sky —

*[As he scrambles up.]*

There is a mountain high,  
Piercing the purple sky. . . .

SAN-CHI

*[Catches the idea, begins to gurgle delightedly, gropes for the table; his fingers close over the sweetmeat and he gives a glad cry, eating it greedily.]*

WOO-LIU-MAI

*[Admiringly.]*

Now, who so swift and clever as San-Chi?

*[She breaks off to listen, springs up, runs to door right.]*

My Lord! My August Husband has arrived!

YIONG-YUENG

*[Entering; a handsome, well groomed authoritative person.]*

I greet you, Woo-Liu-Mai, Sweet Smelling Flower!

*[Curiously.]*

You never fail to hear me when I come!

WOO-LIU-MAI

*[Dropping her eyes, clasping her hands.]*

Sweet Spouse, your foot-steps fall upon the stair  
Like petals in the garden of my heart!

YIONG-YUENG

*[Sedately pleased.]*

Your ears are keen, Plum Blossom. I will eat!

WOO-LIU-MAI

*[With alacrity.]*

King of my humble service, I will fly!

*[Patters off, Left.]*

YIONG-YUENG

*[Seats himself at the table, looks at SAN-CHI, sighs heavily.]*

SAN-CHI

*[Timidly.]*

My August Father!

YIONG-YUENG

*[Austere.]*

Son of sorrow! Well?

SAN-CHI

The streets are very gay, Celestial Sire!  
Here in the house, it's very dull to-night. . . .  
If you, perhaps, would deign to take me out —

YIONG-YUENG

*[Severely.]*

The New Year's gladness is for happy folk,  
Son of Affliction! It is not for you.  
The demons stole your sight . . . and half your wits.

SAN-CHI

*[Whimpering.]*

May I not even when the Dragon comes —

YIONG-YUENG

*[Harshly.]*

Peace!

*[He smokes in stolid silence, casting a look of aversion at his son.]*

SAN-CHI

*[Squatting on the floor, subsides into sulky quiet.]*  
*[The wailing music drifts across the street from the theater.]*

WOO-LIU-MAI

*[Enters from left with a tray which she places on the table.]*Celestial Husband, condescend to eat!  
It is the poor result of meager skill.

YIONG-YUENG

*[Taking up his chop-sticks.]*

What have you served to me, Sweet Smelling Flower?

WOO-LIU-MAI

Food of the joyful New Year, Gentle Lord.—  
Bladder of Eels, Shark's Fin, a Black Dog's Grease,  
A Bird's Nest Pudding and Rice Liquor Wine,—  
And leaves of Honeysuckle for your tea!



YIONG-YUENG

*[Graciously, addressing himself to his supper.]*

You have done well! Serve my afflicted son.

WOO-LIU-MAI

*[Pattering to him.]*

Amiable Step-son, may I feed you, now?

*[Ties on his bib and feeds him from a bowl.]*

YIONG-YUENG

*[Pausing in his feast.]*

Well, Woo-Liu-Mai, the New Year's lilies blow:  
Now, what have you embroidered on your soul  
In golden stitches, for the year to come?

WOO-LIU-MAI

*[Meekly, bowing her sleek head.]*

“Mai-saou”; I mean to sell my idle ways!

YIONG-YUENG

*[Approvingly.]*

A goodly motto, but reflect as well  
On the five vices common to your sex:—  
Slander and jealousy and discontent,  
And indocility and silliness!

*[Eats again.]*

WOO-LIU-MAI

*[Obediently, counting them off on her fingers and thumb.]*

Slander and jealousy and discontent,  
And indocility and silliness!

YIONG-YUENG

Eight out of every ten in female minds  
 Are sore afflicted by these maladies.  
 Hence, their inferiority to men!

WOO-LIU-MAI

Your tongue's a silver pitcher, and my ears  
 Are waiting bowls for your wise words to fill!

YIONG-YUENG

*[Wiping his mouth with dignity, picks up a book, adjusts his huge, bone-rimmed spectacles and turns the pages.]*

Now I will read you what a sage has said.

*[Reads.]*

Let female minds not yearn for beauty.  
 Obedience is their first —

*[Pauses and looks sternly at her.]*

WOO-LIU-MAI

*[Promptly.]*

Duty!

YIONG-YUENG

*[Reads.]*

If an erring female should arouse  
 The thunderous anger of her —

*[Stops as before.]*

WOO-LIU-MAI

*[Demurely.]*

Spouse!

YIONG-YUENG

[*Reads.*]

As female, she must not oppose his might,  
 Argue, or seek to set herself aright,  
 But meekly and without dissembling,  
 Obey her Lord with fear and —

[*Pauses.*]

WOO-LIU-MAI

Trembling!

YIONG-YUENG

[*Pompously concluding.*]

When a female yield herself in this  
 She earns a hope of heavenly bliss.  
 If her spirit never faint or fail,  
 Reincarnated, she may be —

WOO-LIU-MAI

[*Breathlessly.*]

A male!

YIONG-YUENG

[*Closing the book.*]

Do you drink up this wisdom, Woo-Liu-Mai?

WOO-LIU-MAI

My Lord, as thirsting earth the summer rain!

[*She sees that the boy is asleep.*]

August Husband, see,—the Beautiful Bird  
 Has tucked his drowsy head beneath his wing!

YIONG-YUENG

[*Morosely.*]

I would that he might never wake again!

WOO-LIU-MAI

[*Gives a little gasp.*]

YIONG-YUENG

[*With cold fury.*]

Then might the gods' black rage be pacified!  
They will not give to me a second son  
The while this sightless creature bears my name!

WOO-LIU-MAI

[*Covers her face.*]

YIONG-YUENG

[*Musing, bitterly.*]

Were it a girl-child it had . . . *died* . . . at birth.  
Alas, Yiong-Yueng, the fates have cheated you!  
Could I but rouse him to a sense of woe. . . .  
To make him know that he were better dead.  
In vain I give him sharpened knives for toys:  
In vain I leave him groping on the roof:  
The vengeful gods who hatched him, brood him still!  
[*Sharply.*]

Have you obeyed me? — Talked to him of death? —  
Painted it gaily,—rapture and release?

WOO-LIU-MAI

Yes, Live Forever, I have done your will.

YIONG-YUENG

[*Hastily.*]

Always remembering, with due respect!  
A man-child, though bereft of sight and sense,  
Nevertheless is your superior,  
Fair though you are. . . .

WOO-LIU-MAI

But surely, Gentle Lord!

YIONG-YUENG

Confucius ever lauded modesty.  
When pride or vanity beset your soul  
You may repeat and ponder on this rhyme:—

There was a widow with an honest name  
Whose noble deed a long renown has won.  
She, when the cruel days of famine came,  
Unflinching, slew her daughter . . . *fed her son!*

WOO-LIU-MAI

[*Huddled at his feet.*]

Ah, Live Forever, what a golden deed!

YIONG-YUENG

[*Suddenly, with fierce tenderness, flings an arm about  
her shoulders and holds her close.*]

Blossom of bliss, my arms have ached for you!  
Your presence, like the scent of almond flowers,  
Goes with me to the dimness of my shop  
And through the streets and even to my Tong!

WOO-LIU-MAI

*[Faintly, raptly.]*

Oh, Breath of Heaven!

YIONG-YUENG

*[Kissing her.]*

Moi-Quai! Little Rose!

I feel your roots entwining round my heart!

WOO-LIU-MAI

My husband-master . . . live ten thousand years!

YIONG-YUENG

*[Ardently.]*

The demon-spirits envy me my joy:  
They cannot cast the darkness on my path  
Since you have lit the lantern of our love!

WOO-LIU-MAI

*[Clinging to him in timid rapture.]*

Fair words . . . I cannot wash them from my ears!

SAN-CHI

*[Sleepily.]*

Soul-of-a-toad, I will go out again!

WOO-LIU-MAI

*[Nervously, running to rouse him.]*

Beautiful Bird! Wake! You are dreaming still!

SAN-CHI

*[Rubs his eyes.]*

YIONG-YUENG

[*Rising.*]

It is the hour of meeting for my Tong!  
Do not go near the window, Woo-Liu-Mai.  
White Devils throng the tea-house of Chan Sing;  
They peek and pry,— may demons drink their blood!  
They often walk along the balcony,  
So, keep within the shadow of the room.  
I mean to seek another dwelling soon.

[*Goes to door, Right, pauses.*]

Son of affliction, get you to your bed!  
Farewell, and fragrant thoughts, Sweet Smelling Flower!

[*He goes out.*]

WOO-LIU-MAI

[*Devotedly.*]

Peace wait upon your steps, Celestial Spouse!

SAN-CHI

[*Eagerly.*]

Now he is gone and you can take me out!

[*Faint sounds of revelry and a crackle of fire-crackers heard.*]

Soul-of-a-toad, I will go down again!

WOO-LIU-MAI

No, no, San-Chi! You heard your sire's command!  
Not even to the window!— But we'll play!  
Come, let us play a game! What shall I be?—  
The swift steed that the fearless horseman drives?

SAN-CHI

*[Brightening.]*

And I shall beat you! I shall beat you! Quick!  
Where are my reins? My whip? I want my whip!

WOO-LIU-MAI

*[Sighing, slips silken reins over her head and puts  
a bamboo cane in his hand.]*

SAN-CHI

*[Gleefully, striking her.]*

Get up, my swift steed!

WOO-LIU-MAI

*[Prancing.]*

See how fast I go!

SAN-CHI

*[Beating her.]*

My wild horse must be tamed! It must be tamed!

WOO-LIU-MAI

*[Crying out.]*

Mercy, Kind Master! Mercy on your beast!

SAN-CHI

*[Beating her with impish enjoyment.]*

Wait! Are you weeping? Let me feel your tears!

*[Puts his hand on her face, chuckles delightedly.]*

Ah, that is good! Now I am satisfied,  
And I will play again the Sweetmeat Game.



WOO-LIU-MAI

[*Coaxingly.*]

No, not now,—to-morrow, Beautiful Bird!  
You would fall ill, and I should be to blame.

SAN-CHI

[*In a passion, drumming his heels on the floor.*]

I hate you! Hate you! Would that I were dead!

WOO-LIU-MAI

[*Pitifully.*]

It is very beautiful to be dead.

San-Chi . . . there is no cruel darkness there!

Amiable Step-son, life is colorless. . . .

Death has gay streets, wonderful sights to see. . . .

Swift steeds to drive . . . strange lands to journey  
through. . . .

[*Leaning nearer to him, intensely.*]

Beautiful Bird of Woe, spread your blue wings!

Fly from this land of shadow to the light!

SAN-CHI

[*Peevishly.*]

I do not wish to fly! I wish to eat!

[*A blare of music comes up from the street and a  
spiteful staccato of fire-crackers; he capers ex-  
citedly.*]

Go to the window! Tell me what it is!

Soul-of-a-toad, make haste! Be eyes for me!

WOO-LIU-MAI

I dare not disobey our Lord's command!

SAN-CHI

*[In a rage, whipping out his knife.]*

Obeys! I am a man-child! I can kill!

WOO-LIU-MAI

*[Gives a frightened cry, runs to the window, stands on tip-toe, her face thrust through the bars so she can look down into the street, clinging with both hands.]*

Ah, it is wonderful! San-Chi! San-Chi!

SAN-CHI

*[Beside himself as more blatant music rises to them.]*

Oh, tell me! Tell me! Tell me what you see!

WOO-LIU-MAI

*[Swiftly.]*

People in thousands!  
Rag-pickers,  
Mandarins,  
Merchants and White Devils,  
Coolies and Hatchet Men!  
Banners and bunting —  
Lanterns like fire-flies —  
Lanterns like sun-rises —  
Lanterns like lily-ponds —  
Sky-rockets! Sky-rockets

Silver and golden,  
Raining their radiance,—  
Torrents of stars!

[*The drums are heard.*]

SAN-CHI

[*Shrilly.*]

I hear the drums!

WOO-LIU-MAI

The crowd is surging!  
Rising and falling,  
Ocean of people —  
Billowing — tossing —

[*Cries out.*]

The Dragon comes!

[*Drums, music and voices heard.*]

The crowd is swaying,  
It sways like a sea!  
Fire-works! Sky-rockets!  
Bombs are bursting,  
Red fires burning, showers of stars!

SAN-CHI

[*Thrilled.*]

I hear the drumming!

WOO-LIU-MAI

Blue fires burning,  
Darkness has vanished,  
Night-time is day-time,—

The Dragon is coming! —  
 Far up the street!  
 The crowd flows out in a solid wave!  
 Bombs are bursting —  
 It's raining stars!  
 The shrill, sweet music,  
 Shriek of the fiddles —

SAN-CHI

I hear them cheer!

WOO-LIU-MAI

The wave flows back —  
 It is coming! Coming!

*[With a little scream.]*

Ai! The Dragon!  
 The Dragon is here!  
 Long and sinuous,  
 Snaky and terrible,  
 Glittering, gold as the falling stars,  
 Brave and scarlet, green as an emerald,  
 Blue as the sea when the —

*[She breaks off with a shrill cry as —]*

A WHITE DEVIL

*[In evening dress, a top-hat rakishly crushed over one eye, runs along the balcony from the tea-house and seizes her hands on the bars, so that she is powerless to pull away.]*

*[Tipsily.]*

Hello, cute lil' Chink girl! Happy N' Year!  
 Hey, fellers, see wha' I foun'! Cute lil' Chink!

Come, gimme kiss, nice little China doll!  
Come out an' play wiz me, cute lil' Chink!

*[Drawing her arms through the bars, till her face is  
against them.]*

Aw, don' be mean, lil' doll! Gimme one kiss!  
One, stingy, teenty tiny New Y' kiss!

*[Kisses her and lets go of her hands.]*

Say, fellers, you don' know wha' fun you missed!  
Lil' China pippin! Gimme N' Year kiss!

*[Laughing foolishly, he disappears.]*

WOO-LIU-MAI

*[Drops moaning to the floor.]*

SAN-CHI

*[Excitedly.]*

Was it a White Devil, Soul-of-a-toad?  
Was it a White Devil? Answer me! Say!

WOO-LIU-MAI

*[Clasps her head in her hands, moans.]*

YIONG-YUENG

*[Rushing in from the right, furiously.]*

Lo-ki! Woman of shame!

*[As she lifts her head, and starts crawling toward  
him.]*

Crawl to me, worm!  
Infamous, reeking in treacherous sin!

WOO-LIU-MAI

*[Faintly.]*

Listen, my Lord — San Chi,— it was for him —

SAN-CHI

*[Creeps silently off, Left.]*

YIONG-YUENG

Soil not the name of my afflicted son!

*[He draws back his long, loose sleeve, showing a pistol strapped to his wrist; he pushes it down to his grasp, lifts hand, aims at her.]*

Now, may ten thousand demons drink your blood!

WOO-LIU-MAI

*[Kneels, meekly holding out her arms.]*

My Lord, I die already in your rage!

YIONG-YUENG

*[Cannot fire.]*

I cannot shatter flesh that I have kissed! . . .

*[Drops pistol, takes small box from pocket.]*

Yet you shall die! I have a poison here,

Swift in its power and terrible in strength. . . .

*[He places a piece of pink sweetmeat on the edge of the table.]*

Eat! You will fall asleep!

*[Battling with his emotion, stands looking at her, shuddering.]*

Alas! My rose

Fair in the blossom, rotten at the root!

WOO-LIU-MAI

Moon-of-my-soul, I have been true to you!

YIONG-YUENG

[*Going toward door, Right.*]

Be quick! Within five minutes I return. . . .  
Then, if you live, I call the Hatchet Men!  
One gate of honor in your wall of shame!  
Open that gate, oh, shameless, and pass through!  
[*He goes.*]

WOO-LIU-MAI

[*Drags herself to the shrine.*]

Merciful Goddess with ears in your heart. . . .  
Mother and comforter . . . make him to see —  
His black rage makes him blind —

SAN-CHI

[*Creeping in.*]

Soul-of-a-toad!

WOO-LIU-MAI

Kind Kwannin . . . look on me with summer face,  
For it is winter in my Lord's cold heart!  
Help him to know . . . to find the hidden truth —  
The hidden —  
[*She swoons.*]

SAN-CHI

[*Delightedly.*]

—hidden? It's the Sweetmeat Game!

*[He begins to grope about, hunting, croons to himself.]*

Not where the temples stand —

Not on the ocean's strand —

There is a mountain high —

Piercing the purple sky —

*[He bumps against the table, gurgles with glee.]*

Mountain high . . . purple sky . . .

*[Gives a cry of joy as his fingers close over the poisoned sweetmeat; gobbles it greedily; he sits down beside the table; from the theater across the way comes a long, wailing melody, piercing and poignant; he slips softly to the floor, his arm across his face, as if in sleep; it is very still. A little pause.]*

YIONG-YUENG

*[Rushes in from the Right, frantic with terror and remorse.]*

Sweet Smelling Flower! My Plum Tree! Woo-Liu-Mai!

I saw him in the street — a drunken fool —

Chan Sing has told me! You were not to blame!

*[He sees her prostrate before the shrine; he looks at the table and sees the poison is gone; he groans.]*

May demons torture me a thousand years!

*[He kneels beside her, lifting her.]*

Mai-Quai! Small Rose! My Weeping Willow Tree!

WOO-LIU-MAI

*[Faintly.]*

Am I in Paradise beside my Lord?



YIONG-YUENG

Here on my heart, pale blossom, pass to peace!  
Then I will follow on swift wings of death!

WOO-LIU-MAI

*[Bewildered.]*

Moon-of-my-soul, I did not eat . . . I swooned!

YIONG-YUENG

*[Lifting her to her feet.]*

Sweet Smelling Flower! The Poison! It is gone!

WOO-LIU-MAI

*[Breathlessly.]*

Merciful Kwannin . . . miracle of grace. . .

*[She goes to the table, stumbles against the boy; she  
stoops over him for an instant.]*

YIONG-YUENG

*[Seeing him, in a whisper.]*

What?

WOO-LIU-MAI

*[With a faint, mysterious smile.]*

The Beautiful Bird . . . has flown away!

*[The poignant melody drifts over the street from the  
theater; far off there is the dull beat of a drum,  
and a sputter of fire-crackers.]*

CURTAIN

FINIS





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